Air Force Hopes To Reduce Time Critical Targeting To Minutes
By Frank Wolfe

The Air Force believes it can reduce time critical targeting to "single digit minutes" in the next three to four years, a top Air Force official said yesterday.

"I think we can get this down to single digit minutes where we think of targets that emerge on the battlefield much like we think about targets that we see on the radar scope of an F-15," Air Force Gen. John Jumper, commander of Air Combat Command, told reporters at the Pentagon via a videoteleconference from Hurlburt Field, Fla. Jumper is there as the Combined Forces Air Component Commander for Joint Expeditionary Force Experiment 2000 (JEFX 2000), which is to evaluate promising technologies for future investment.

More than 100 aircraft are participating in JEFX 2000, which also involves simulations. One of the primary focuses of the experiment is time critical targeting, the ability to find and destroy fleeting enemy targets, like tanks, mobile surface to air missiles and troop formations.

Such targeting proved problematic in Operation Allied Force last year. Though the military had in place a time critical targeting element composed of Army and Air Force operators and targeters for that conflict, the personnel did not have "the software and information processing we need to really make it quick," Jumper said yesterday.

Air Force Gen. Michael Ryan has said that the goal is to have Air Force fielding of a capability against time critical mobile targets for all service platforms by FY '05 (*Defense Daily*, Feb. 28). To do so, the service is investing in technologies similar to Link 16 and trying to integrate air and space platforms.

The Air Force also wants to use a "data wall" developed by its Rome Laboratories. The "data wall" displays a battlespace picture and allows a targeter to zero in on a particular location with a computer cursor.

"When you activate it, it begins to call in all the data available for that particular location, whether it's a scud missile or whatever that emerging target may be," Jumper said. "We have the data wall and the things it's able to present up with the sort of fidelity we need to make that sort of thing happen. What we have to do is work with the web basing, the attachments to the data bases that are required and the portal process, much like we see on today's information internet web pages that portal us to the information pieces that you have to have to make your decisions. We're talking about decision quality information to be able to make that rapid decision."

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